



NEWS RELEASE

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GROUNDBREAKING BRINGS FELLSMERE FARM LABOR HOUSING CLOSER TO REALITY

January 15, 2004, Fellsmere, FL — "Today's groundbreaking of Whispering Pines Apartments is proof that providing farm workers improved living conditions and an opportunity for a greater quality of life are priorities in Fellsmere," said USDA Rural Development State Director Charles Clemons, Sr. "We are pleased we are able to assist the Fellsmere Community Enrichment Program in this most important endeavor."

Quality housing is the cornerstone of economic security and is the ladder of opportunity for millions of families in the United States. Today's event marks a new beginning for farm workers in the Fellsmere area. With 82 units, Whispering Pines Apartments will provide opportunity for a clean, safe, and affordable place to live.

The Whispering Pines community is made possible by USDA Rural Development assistance in the form of grant funding of \$1,050,000 and loan funding of \$1,450,000 as well as a \$6 million grant from Florida Housing Finance Corporation. The 82-unit apartment community, located in northwest Indian River County, will help meet the housing needs of agricultural workers primarily in the citrus industry. Construction of the duplex and quadplex homes is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

USDA Rural Development serves as the lead Federal entity for rural development needs and administers financial and technical assistance through three agencies: Rural Housing Service, Rural Business-Cooperative Service and Rural Utilities Service. USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure.

USDA capital financing of farm worker housing is provided through loans and grants administered by USDA Rural Development. Loans are made to farmers, associations of farmers, family farm corporations, Indian tribes, nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and associations of farm workers.

Further information on USDA Rural Development can be obtained by contacting any USDA Service Center or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/fl>